

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 02848 260849Z

43

ACTION OES-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-09 ISO-00 NSC-05 ACDA-10 CIAE-00 INR-07

IO-11 L-03 NSAE-00 EB-07 NRC-07 FEAЕ-00 DODE-00 /065 W
----- 013499

R 260815Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7201
INFO USERDA WASHDC

UNCLAS TOKYO 2848

DEPT PLS PASS NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION, NATIONAL SECURITY
COUNCIL

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, TBIO, ENRG, JA

SUBJECT: USE OF ALGAE FOR FIRST STAGE HEAVY WATER PRODUCTION

1. A PROCESS FOR ENRICHING HEAVY WATER TO GREATER THAN 1 PCT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY A JAPANESE BIOPHYSICIST. IT USES CERTAIN STRAINS OF ALGAE GROWN UNDER ARTIFICIAL PHOTOSYNTHETIC CONDITIONS IN A CLOSED NUTRIENT CYCLE. THE ALGAE LITERALLY CONCENTRATE HEAVY WATER WITHIN THEIR CELL WALLS, AND A PORTION OF THE CULTURE MEDIUM ALSO BECOMES ENRIVED IN HEAVY WATER. WATER FRACTIONS RECOVERED FROM THESE TWO SOURCES ARE THEN FURTYR ENRIKX BY A LOW-TEMPERATURE ULTRACENTRIFUGATION PROCESS. CONCENTRATIONS OF ABOUT 1.5 PCT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR. THEORETICALLY, CONCENTRATIONS APPROACHING 20 PCT APPEAR TO BE FEASIBLE BY THE USE OF NUTRIENT RECCLE, PROVIDED THAT THE ALGAE CAN SURVIVE THE PRESENCE OF SIMULTANEOUSLY INCREASED CONCENTRATIONS OF TOXIC IMPURITIES.

2. WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY A UNIVERSITY BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM IS NOW BEING FUNDED ON A COMMERCIAL BASIS BY THE POWER REACTOR AND NUCLEAR FUEL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (PNC) AND THREE LARGE PILOT PLANTS ARE NOW IN CONSTRUCTION OR OPERATION. AN ORAL PAPER HAS BEEN GIVEN ON THIS SUBJECT UNCLASSIFIED

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BY THE JAPANESE SCIENTIST BEFORE THE ATOMIC ENERGY SOCIETY

OF JAPAN AND THE PAPER IS NOW IN PRESS. EXXEPT FOR A
BRIEF NEWS STORY IN A JAPANESE NEWSPAPER ON FEBRUARY 4,
THERE HAS BEEN NO OTHER PBLCIATION OF THE RESULTS OBTAINED.
A JAPANESE PATENT ON THE PROCESS WAS ISSUED ABOUT THREE YEARS
AGO.

3. COMMENT: IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE EMBASSY'S SCICOUNS,
THE PROCESS APPEARS TO BE SOUND ECONOMICALLY, SINCE THE ALGAE
ARE BEING GROWN FOR THEIR VALUE AS A FOOD SUPPLEMENT, WITH
THE PARTIALLY ENRICHED HEAVY WATER BEING A BY-PRODUCT. MOST
OF THE COMPLEXITY OF HEAVY WATER PRODUCTION IS CONNECTED
WITH INCREASING THE CONCENTRATION FROM THE LEVEL FOUND IN
NATURE TO THE ORDER OF A FEW PER CENT, AND THE ALGAE
PROCESS COULD OPEN UP A PATH FOR ALMMOST ANY COUNTRY TO
ENGAGE IN HEAVY WATER PRODUCTION ON WHATEVER SCALE IT
DESIRE. SCICOUNS HAS HAD EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH
INVENTOR OF PROCESS AND CAN PROVIDE DETAILED DESCRIPTI-
ON OF PROCESS IF WASHINGTON AGENCIES INTERESTED.
HODGSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NUCLEAR ENERGY, RESEARCH, HEAVY WATER
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TOKYO02848
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760074-0148
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976028/aaaaagdg.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: castelsl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2004 by schwenja>; APPROVED <02 SEP 2004 by castelsl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: USE OF ALGAE FOR FIRST STAGE HEAVY WATER PRODUCTION
TAGS: TECH, TBIO, ENRG, JA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006